

APPENDIX 4

PAST, PRESENT, AND REASONABLY FORESEEABLE FUTURE ACTIONS

Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-03-02

The proposed treatment areas are located within three fifth field watersheds: the North Yamhill (525 + WHE), the Lower South Yamhill (116 acres) and the Nestucca (6 acres), and four sixth field watersheds: Baker Creek, Haskins Creek, Panther Creek, Upper Deer Creek, and six acres in the Upper Nestucca River. The majority of the treatment area is covered in *The Deer Creek, Panther Creek, Willamina Creek and South Yamhill Watershed Analysis* (BLM, 1998). *The North Yamhill Watershed Analysis* (BLM, 1997) does not include the proposed treatment areas, however a majority of the project areas are within the North Yamhill fifth-field watershed. This WA gives analysis and recommendations for the three remaining sixth fields in the North Yamhill fifth field watershed. *The Nestucca Watershed Analysis* (BLM and USFS, 1995) gives guidance for the six proposed treatment areas in the Nestucca.

The past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the North Yamhill and Lower South Yamhill and Nestucca fifth-fields are listed below. The character of the watersheds is described in the three Watershed Analyses mentioned above and is supplemented with information in Chapter 3 of the environmental assessment. The predicted trend in the relevant resources (vegetation, soils, water, fisheries, wildlife) in consideration of the reasonably foreseeable actions is also discussed. The cumulative effects of the past, present, and reasonable foreseeable actions will be analyzed in Chapter 4 of the Environmental Assessment.

Actions:

Past Actions

Past: * Native Americans used fire on a regular basis, primarily in the pursuit and maintenance of traditional food sources; in the upper parts of the watershed the historical fire interval is estimated to be between 150 to 200 years; * in 1939 the Saddle Mountain Fire burned 210,000 acres in the Northwest one-third of the watershed; * timber harvest rates increased after 1873, when the North Yamhill River was used to float logs to larger downstream mills; * the Carlton and Coast Railroad and the invention of the steam donkey in the early 1900's increased harvest levels further; * salvage logging in began in the late 1930's in almost every drainage; many areas were re-logged 4 to 5 times as markets for wood products developed; * primary logging methods were tractor and cable, both highlead and groundlead; operations occurred throughout the year; * many haul and skid roads were built to access and yard timber, streams were used as yarding roads by the tractors; * most roads were unsurfaced; * log drives and splash damming simplified and entrenched stream channels in the low elevation reaches of each sub-watershed; * gathering of special forest products such as landscape transplants, floral greenery, Christmas trees, seed cones, berries, mushrooms, western red cedar shake bolts; * winter steelhead trout is the only

anadromous fish species to historically use the Yamhill River drainage; * no known runs of native steelhead in the North or South Yamhill river by 1958; *between 1900's and 1960's, dams at LaFayette and Carlton were barriers to fish passage, these barriers were removed in 1960's; *since 1951, a dam on Haskins Cr. Has blocked fish passage; * some dispersed camping, target shooting, hunting, fishing and pleasure driving were all historic recreation activities; * a failing culvert was replaced with a bridge at Panther Creek on Von Road in 2001.

Present Actions

Present: * High amounts of logging are occurring on private lands as the many of the stands are in the 40-60 year old age class which is desirable for harvesting by private industry; * all logging occurs in accordance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act and the resultant clearcuts are intensively managed (thinning, spraying herbicides, etc) * high amount of recreational use, primarily by off-highway vehicles and horses; * attempts are made to immediately suppress all wildfires; * reciprocal Right-of-way Agreements exist for all BLM lands within the watershed; * forest vegetation is primarily composed of stands in the 40 to 80 year old age class, 9% (80-199 years) of the watershed has late-seral conditions and 1% is considered to be old-growth (200+ years); * parts of the watershed around Ball-Bearing Hill have over 40% of the area infected with *Phylinus weirri* root rot; * very low demand for special forest products; * landsliding and erosion of road surfaces, streambanks and OHV trails are considered the dominant erosional processes; * winter steelhead populations are very depressed and may be at record low numbers; * steelhead may be extirpated in the North Yamhill river; * the BLM maintains a contract with the Oregon State Department of Agriculture (OSDA) for integrated identification, control, and management of noxious weeds on BLM lands; * McGuire Reservoir is being raised approximately 30 feet, this will change the reservoir water surface from 138 acres to 260 acres; * City of McMinnville, Yamhill and Carlton have municipal water supply diversions within the analysis area; * deer, elk, black bear and cougar are all present with stable or increasing populations; * a Northern Spotted Owl nest site is located near the McGuire Reservoir; * road maintenance and clearing of vegetation is done on a scheduled basis as needed; the communication site off of High Heaven Road is currently undergoing improvements.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Reasonably Foreseeable: * logging will continue at the current rate on private industrial lands because many of the stands are in the 40-60 year old age class which is desirable for harvesting by private industry * it is assumed that all logging will occur in accordance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act and the resultant clearcuts will be intensively managed (thinning, spraying herbicides, etc) * logging will continue on Federal lands at current levels; * increased road density on private lands and decreased density on public lands (due to road decommissioning projects); *dispersed recreation opportunities to continue at current rate; * OHV use and horse use to continue at high level; * implementation of some stream enhancement projects by the BLM, Yamhill Watershed Council, private landowners and others; * fire suppression activities will continue at current levels; * storm events; * OSDA will continue to apply control measures to noxious weeds along roadsides; *competing brush control will continue to occur in forest

plantations;* approximately 2.5 miles of road that was analyzed in the Yamhill Road Stabilization EA (BLM, 2001) would be decommissioned at the completion of the Baker Creek Density management project; * an EA is being developed for campgrounds and horse trails in the Slide Mountain Area by the CREST equestrian group, and is expected to be completed during the summer of 2003; * Preliminary project planning on Turner Creek and Panther Creek has identified a number of potential restoration, habitat improvement and density management projects that have been proposed, and which could be implemented within the next five to ten years; 10 culverts on Baker Creek road scheduled to be replaced or improved under the current BLM. road maintenance schedule.

Predicted Trend in the Condition of Relevant Resources

The following resource condition information is taken in part from the watershed analyses, with the addition of a discussion of the predicted trend in the condition of the relevant resources within the watershed in consideration of the reasonably foreseeable actions. This discussion is based primarily upon the professional opinion of the interdisciplinary team.

Vegetation:

The trend on private land is to harvest stands while they are still well within the small conifer stage, maintaining primarily Douglas-fir plantations. The planting of Douglas-fir in areas that are infected with *Phyllinus weirri* will increase the spread and persistence of the disease. The present ownership pattern and federal land allocations will most likely continue to maintain a landscape pattern characterized by early seral stage stands, and a high degree of forest fragmentation. Past and present forest management activities (primarily timber harvest and road construction, has greatly reduced the amount of legacies (green trees, snags, and coarse woody debris) from the previous stands, degraded riparian habitat and increased the spread of exotic plants and noxious weeds. Future management actions on federal land will be in accordance with the April, 1994 *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, which contains management direction to provide for legacies, restore and maintain the ecological health of riparian ecosystems, and contain and/or reduce noxious weed infestations. Since the BLM manages approximately 10% of the North and South Yamhill fifth field watersheds, through time the amount of older forests should increase, however the scattered nature of the federal ownership will not allow for contiguous areas of older forest. In consideration of this, coupled with the future actions expected to occur on private land, there is limited potential for improvement in the amount of legacies, riparian habitat condition, or the rate of spread of noxious weeds in the watershed.

Soils:

Future management actions on federal land will be in accordance with the Salem RMP which contains management direction to maintain and restore the sediment regime under which aquatic ecosystems evolved. Despite predicted reductions in road miles on Federal lands outlined in the The Yamhill Road Stabilization EA, road building will probably continue to increase in the watershed. Since only about 10% of the watershed is administered by the BLM, any beneficial action taken on federal land will have minimal impact on the sediment regime within the watershed. In consideration of this, coupled with the future actions expected to occur on private land, there is limited potential for improvement in the sediment regime in the watershed

Water:

Past and present actions, primarily timber harvest, road construction, and residential development, have influenced the hydrologic processes of the watershed to the point that the most of the stream channels are not in “proper functioning condition.” Future management actions on federal land will be in accordance with the Salem RMP which contains management direction to maintain or restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems. Since only approximately 10% of the watershed is administered by the BLM, and these lands are not distributed in a major block, any beneficial action taken on federal land will have minimal impact on water quality within the watershed. In consideration of this, coupled with the future actions expected to occur on private land, there is limited potential for improvement in the hydrologic processes of the watershed.

Fisheries:

Future management actions on federal land will be in accordance with the Salem RMP which contains management direction to maintain or restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems, and to maintain or enhance fisheries potential. Since only approximately 10% of the watershed is managed by the BLM, and any action taken on federal land will have minimal impact on fish species and their habitats within the watershed. The BLM will likely pursue cooperative efforts with the Yamhill Watershed Council, private landowners and others to implement instream habitat improvements, which would lead to some improvement in aquatic habitat conditions throughout the watershed. In addition, the *Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds* should lead to some improvement in aquatic habitat, though to what extent is unknown, as this is largely a volunteer effort.

Wildlife:

The North Yamhill and South Yamhill Watersheds are dominated by highly fragmented timber stands, that are mostly 40 to 60 years old, interspersed with early seral stage habitat primarily located on intensively managed industrial forest lands. As a consequence of patches of younger, small conifers and larger aggregated clearcuts being distributed across the landscape, the area is permeated with high contrast edges and contains little interior forest habitat. Many forested riparian corridors have been harvested or reduced to thin strips of red alder. There is very little mature forest and virtually no old-growth timber (1%) left within the watersheds. As a result of forest

fragmentation and the general landscape pattern, the ability of some species to disperse, within this watershed or move across the larger landscape, has been greatly limited. For species dependant upon later seral stage habitat, these factors and the resulting landscape pattern have resulted in dispersal problems.

In general, past and present actions have resulted in little or no habitat for those species dependant upon later seral stage habitat including snags or coarse woody debris, large blocks of interior forested habitat or diverse, cool, shaded, riparian habitats within the watershed. Conversely, there is a great deal of habitat for those species that depend upon or utilize early seral stage habitats, smaller patches and the juxtaposition of differing habitat types. Overall, the instream habitat conditions within the watershed are poor. Future management actions on federal land will be in accordance with the Salem RMP management plans which contains management direction to provide for healthy forest ecosystems with habitat that will support populations of native species and includes protection for riparian areas and waters. Since only approximately 10% of the watershed is managed by the BLM, any action taken on federal land will have minimal impact on wildlife species and their habitats within the watershed. In consideration of this, coupled with the future actions expected to occur on private land, there is limited potential for improvement of habitat for species with larger home ranges requiring later-seral habitat characteristics, or in-stream habitat conditions within the watershed.